

Without Love, What "Good" Is Life?

This special message was given at North Christian Church in January, 2024. To watch the video, please visit nccdighton.org

On Sunday, this idea came up when we compared a couple passages about "good" deeds that are NOT done out of love.

God requires our motivation for good deeds to be love...

... HIS love in particular, as HE is where true love begins.

The question on the table is: *Can anything be "good", truly, if it's not done in love???*

This goes back to the fact that God wants our hearts, not our lip service, or even our empty actions, as you know.

And our actions, **even our good deeds**, are EMPTY in God's eyes if they're done for reasons other than love.

Maybe this is one reason for Paul's prayer for the believers at **Ephesus...**

... **the same church** that Jesus addresses as losing their first love in **Rev 2!!**

Don't you love it when it all comes together like this? :) Only the Holy Spirit can do this for us.

Eph 3:14-19 *For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, 16 that according*

*to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, 17 so that **Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith** —that you, **being rooted and grounded in love**, 18 may have strength to **comprehend** with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to **know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge**, that you may be **filled with all the fullness of God**.*

The question came up on Sunday...

... if we disobey God by making Him second fiddle in our hearts, do we think we'll get to see and experience these great things in **Eph 3??**

Let's take one more look at vs. 17-19...

Eph 3:17-19 *so that **Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith** —that you, **being rooted and grounded in love**, 18 may have strength to **comprehend** with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to **know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge**, that you may be **filled with all the fullness of God**.*

We've recently talked about not only seeking God diligently, but from the right heart...

... which is **a heart of love and gratitude as our motivation**; that should be the **WHY** we do what we do.

Without that humble approach towards our God and Father, we will not discover these treasures for the soul.

Now, the shocking thing, **from our human perspective**, is that we can do good things...

... even things God's Word commands of us...

... and yet **have it end up as wood, hay, and straw** that gets burned up at the Judgment Seat!

Let's look at this old friend again, as he fits right in to our subject:

(1Co 3:10) *According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it.*

(1Co 3:11) *For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

(1Co 3:12) *Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw —*

(1Co 3:13) *each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. (other translations say the "quality" of the work)*

(1Co 3:14) *If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward.*

(1Co 3:15) *If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.*

Could it be that the quality of our work in God's eyes **depends upon our motivation behind it??** Of course!

We should never get tired of hearing that **God looks at the heart.** (ala **1Sa 16:7**)

This is the very reason Jesus was so angry with the Pharisees.

They were hypocrites, per Jesus, and even though they looked godly on the outside, on the inside they were "full of dead men's bones", because their hearts were not with Him. (ala **Mat 23**)

My friends, as we see from Holy Scripture,...

... we can be doing a lot of good and right things, but if we don't have love.... what good is it in God's eyes?!

Or, to our message title, *Without Love, What "Good" Is Life?*

We see a HUGE example of this truth in 1Corinthians!

Remember what the Spirit inspired to us about the NEED for love???

1 Co 13:1-3 *If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.*

My friends, note the word "nothing", as in nothing truly good in God's eyes.

Think of the *wood, hay, and straw* analogy.... those refer to so-called "good" deeds that get burned up and come to nothing but ashes.

There's "nothing" good in ashes, is there??

Talk about humbling!!

Talk about a reason to seek the Lord diligently and ask for His help!!

And God Himself showed us how to do things from the heart when He came down to earth for us in the Person of Christ.

LOVE motivated Him to come save us, even though He had no obligation to do so.

And as the apostle John wrote, "*we love because He first loved us*". **1Jn 4:19**

Therefore, we can and should follow HIS example.

We must get out of the way and prayerfully allow His love to be our motivation in everything we do!

Now, let's look at our passage in Rev 2 with a slightly different perspective.

You tell me... what do you see here??

Again, we can be doing a lot of good and right things, but if we don't have love.... what good is it in God's eyes?!

And this is why we check ourselves, we examine ourselves, as we go throughout our day.

Pause and check your motivation before you do any good deed, so that it comes out acceptable to God, to the glory of God, being done from a humble and loving heart.

(Rev 2:1) "*To the angel of the church in Ephesus* (remember Paul's prayer for them in Eph 3?) *write: 'The words of him who holds the*

seven stars in his right hand, who walks among the seven golden lampstands.

(Rev 2:2) "I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false.

(Rev 2:3) I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary.

(wow, what a great church, huh?? and Jesus is complementing them!!)

(Rev 2:4) But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first.

(Rev 2:5) Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent.

This should remind us of **1Co 13**, where without love our good deeds amount to "nothing" in God's eyes.

And also **1Co 3**, where some of our good deeds burned up at the Judgment Seat come to ashes, equivalent to nothing of any value.

All because we do those deeds "without love", or because we've lost our first love...

... so the quality of our works are now unacceptable to God.

After all, **God is love!!! - 1Jn 4**

And as the Spirit encouraged us on Sunday...

Let's repent, and do the deeds we did at first, as the Lord commands.

HOW can we do this?? - With the faith of a child!!

With the faith of a child, we can go back there and regain our first love for Him.

With all this in mind, let's explore what else the Bible has to say about this!

(Isa 57:7) On a high and lofty mountain you have set your bed, and there you went up to offer sacrifice.

*(Isa 57:8) Behind the door and the doorpost you have set up your memorial; for, **deserting me (the opposite of love)**, you have uncovered your bed, you have gone up to it, you have made it wide; and you have made a covenant for yourself with them, you have loved their bed, you have looked on nakedness.*

(Isa 57:9) You journeyed to the king with oil and multiplied your perfumes; you sent your envoys far off, and sent down even to Sheol.

(Isa 57:10) You were wearied with the length of your way, but you did not say, "It is hopeless"; you found new life for your strength, and so you were not faint.

*(Isa 57:11) Whom did you dread and fear, so that you lied, and did not remember me, **did not lay it to heart?** Have I not held my peace, even for a long time, and you do not fear me?*

(Isa 57:12) I will declare your righteousness and your deeds, but they will not profit you.

Good deeds must be done from a heart FOR GOD, or they are NOT good.

This passage details the Jews cheating on the Lord with other so-called gods; turning to them for answers and provisions.

Obviously, this is the opposite of love for God our Creator.

This reminds me of how we sometimes make God second fiddle in our lives, when we're essentially cheating on God with the world and its ways.

It may not be as obvious as in **Is 57**, but this is where self-examination comes in... *"what's my motivation right now??"*

Here's a NT passage with the same idea...

(1Co 8:1) *Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that "all of us possess knowledge." This "knowledge" puffs up, but **love builds up.***

(1Co 8:2) *If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.*

(1Co 8:3) ***But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.***

(1Co 8:4) *Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one."*

(1Co 8:5) *For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—*

(1Co 8:6) ***yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.***

I'm reminded of John's surprising ending to his first letter:

1 Jn 5:21 *Little children, keep yourselves from idols.*

When we turn to idols in our hearts, whatever and whoever they might be in this world, we are "deserting" God in our hearts at that moment.

We are not loving God in that moment!

Again, a **key principle** today is this:

Good deeds must be done from a heart FOR GOD, or they are NOT good.

By now, we know that LOVE is the great motivation.

And it's the only way to do good things for God; to fulfill His Law even.

We now live under the law of Christ, which is in total agreement with the following truth from the OT Law...

(Mat 22:34) But when the Pharisees heard that he had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together.

(Mat 22:35) And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him.

(Mat 22:36) "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

(Mat 22:37) And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

(Mat 22:38) This is the great and first commandment.

(Mat 22:39) And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

(Mat 22:40) On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

When we stay in the sphere of love, obeying God's commands to love Him and one another, we have it all!

And Jesus, throughout His life, gave us many examples of how to live in His love.

In this way only, the way of love... our deeds bring glory to God.

(Joh 13:1) *Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.*

(Joh 13:2) *During supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him,*

(Joh 13:3) *Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he had come from God and was going back to God,*

(Joh 13:4) *rose from supper. He laid aside his outer garments, and taking a towel, tied it around his waist.*

(Joh 13:5) *Then he poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel that was wrapped around him.*

(Joh 13:6) *He came to Simon Peter, who said to him, "Lord, do you wash my feet?"*

(Joh 13:7) *Jesus answered him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but afterward you will understand."*

(Joh 13:8) *Peter said to him, "You shall never wash my feet." Jesus answered him, "If I do not wash you, you have no share with me."*

(Joh 13:9) *Simon Peter said to him, "Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!"*

(Joh 13:10) *Jesus said to him, "The one who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, but is completely clean. And you are clean, but not every one of you."*

(Joh 13:11) *For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, "Not all of you are clean."*

(Joh 13:12) When he had washed their feet and put on his outer garments and resumed his place, he said to them, "Do you understand what I have done to you?"

(Joh 13:13) You call me Teacher and Lord, and you are right, for so I am.

(Joh 13:14) If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.

(Joh 13:15) For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you.

That reminds me of Pastor's recent blog; to give others the benefit of the doubt.

We've all got to be quick and ready to forgive, not quick to judge.

Jesus has given us the perfect examples of this.

Jn 13:34 *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.*

Jn 15:12-14 *"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. 13 Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends. 14 You are my friends if you do what I command you.*

Jas 2:8 *If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.*

In other words, instead of "nothing", it's profitable!

1 Co 16:22-24 *If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come! 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. 24 My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

Gal 5:6 *For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.*

A practical example of living in His love:

Gal 6:1-2 *Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. 2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*

And finally, let's see a beautiful passage in Hebrews about having a heart for God, related to love and good deeds...

(Heb 10:19) *Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus,*

(Heb 10:20) *by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh,*

(Heb 10:21) *and since we have a great priest over the house of God,*

(Heb 10:22) *let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.*

(Heb 10:23) *Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.*

(Heb 10:24) *And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,*

(Heb 10:25) *not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.*

Let's never forget **the life-giving connection** between love and good works!

"Good" by God's standards means good deeds done from love.

Let's not measure ourselves by our own good deeds, done for other reasons!!

Let's allow LOVE to be **our only reason** to walk in the commands of our Lord.

Amen?!